EL HORNERO
REVISTA DE ORNITOLOGÍA NEOTROPICAL
Establecida en 1917
ISSN 0073-3407
Publicada por Aves Argentinas/Asociación Ornitológica del Plata
Buenos Aires, Argentina

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1990

Cita: Hayes, F. E.; Escobar Argaña, J. (1990) Vertebrados en la Dieta de Trepadores (Aves: Dendrocolaptidae). *Hornero* 013 (02) : 162-165

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Vertebrates in the diet of woodcreepers (Aves: Dendrocolaptidae)

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RESUMEN. Vertebrados en la Dieta de Trepadores (Aves: Dendrocolaptidae). Se registraron observaciones del trepador castaño *(Xiphocolaptes major)* y el chinchero chico *(Lepidocolaptes angustirostris)* alimentándose o tratando de alimentarse de presas de vertebrados. La incidencia de vertebrados en la dieta de trepadores (Dendrocolaptidae) es revisada.

Although most species of woodcreepers feed primarily on invertebrates, several species are known to prey on small vertebrates. Here we report for the first time observations of the Great Rufous Woodcreeper *(Xiphocolaptes major)* and Narrow-billed Woodcreeper *(Lepidocolaptes angustirostris)* feeding or attempting to feed on vertebrate prey. We also review and discuss the incidence of vertebrates in the diet of woodcreepers.

The feeding habits of both the Great Rufous Woodcreeper and the Narrow-billed Woodcreeper are poorly known. Sclater & Hudson (1888) and Wetmore (1926) described the foraging behavior of these species, and Zotta (1936) reported finding orthopterans and coleopterans in the stomachs of seven Great Rufous Woodcreepers.

In November 1986, JEA viewed a Great Rufous Woodcreeper from approximately 15 m as it flew from a tree to the ground at Estancia Faro Moro, Department of (Dept.) Nueva Asunción, Paraguay. Moments later the woodcreeper returned to a branch of the same tree, and an unidentified hylid frog approximately 7 cm long was observed in the woodcreeper's bill. After bashing the frog several times against the branch, the woodcreeper began swallowing the frog head first, a process that terminated about 1 min later.

On 13 June 1987, FEH observed a Great Rufous Woodcreeper as it flew from tree to tree at Laguna Negra, ca. 10 km NW of Fortín Toledo, Dept. Boquerón, Paraguay. A few seconds after the woodcreeper landed near the top of an approximately 6 m tree about 35 m away, an unidentified colubrid snake (probably *Leptophis* sp. or *Philodryas* sp) approximately 40 cm long was observed struggling in the bill of the woodcreeper. The woodcreeper's bill firmly grasped the middle of the snake's body; the snake did not bite the bird, nor did the bird peck at the snake. Moments later the bird flew to the ground behind the trunk of another tree. As FEH rushed to the site to determine if the snake had escaped while on the ground, the woodcreeper flew directly away into the forest and was not observed again. A careful search of the immediate vicinity failed to locate the snake; presumably the woodcreeper had carried it away.

On 10 October 1989, JEA noted a Narrow-billed Woodcreeper enter a cavity about 1.5 m

above the ground in the trunk of an approximately 3 m high papaya tree at Retiro Potrerito, Dept. Alto Paraguay, Paraguay. JEA approached the tree and, when only about 3 m away, saw the Woodcreeper emerge from the hole with and unidentified hylid frog approximately 6 cm long in its bill. Alarmed at the close proximity of a human, the Woodcreeper flew with the frog across a field to the forest edge about 70 m away; afterwards the bird could not be relocated.

A review of the literature reveals that al least 13 of the 50 known species of Neotropical dendrocolaptids (excluding two questionable species listed by Clements [1981]) are known to feed or attempt to feed on vertebrate prey (Table 1). The prey items identified include salamanders, frogs, lizards, the eggs of passerines and, for the first time, a snake. Of these 13 species, the Great Rufous Woodcreeper is the largest and the Tawny-winged Woodcreeper *(Dendrocincla anabatina)* is the smallest. A comparison of the number of Woodcreeper species known or not known to feed or attempt to feed on vertebrate prey suggests that the large and medium sized species of Woodcreepers are most likely to feed on vertebrate prey (Table

Table 1. Prey items of woodcreeper species known to feed or attempt to feed on vertebrate prey. Taxonomy follows Clements (1981). Body length measurements (cm) are based on Blake (1953) and Meyer de Schauensee (1970).

Species	Length	Item(s)	Source(s)1
Plain-brown Woodcreeper *Dendrocincla fuliginosa*	20	lizards	11
Tawny-winged Woodcreeper *Dendrocincla anabatina*	19	lizards	7,9
White-throated Woodcreeper *Xiphocolaptes albicollis*	28	eggs of passerines	6
Great Rufous Woodcreeper *Xiphocolaptes major*	33	snake, frog	this paper
Barred Woodcreeper *Dendrocolaptes certhia*	27	frogs, lizards	8,9
Black-banded Woodcreeper *Dendrocolaptes picumnus*	28	small cold-blooded vertebrates, lizard	4,12
Planalto Woodcreeper *Dendrocolaptes platyrostris*	27	frog	1
Straight-billed Woodcreeper *Xiphorhynchus picus*	22	lizards	3
Buff-throated Woodcreeper *Xiphorhynchus guttatus*	28	frogs, lizards	9,10
Black-striped Woodcreeper *Xiphorhynchus lachrymosus*	24	frog, lizards	2,9
Spotted Woodcreeper *Xiphorhynchus* sp.	23	frogs, salamanders	9
Narrow-billed Woodcreeper *Lepidocolaptes angustirostris*	22	frog	this paper
Red-billed Scythebill *Campylorhamphus trochilirostris*	31	tiny bones found in stomach	5

1= Belton (1984); 2 = Feduccia (1970); 3 = Haverschmidt (1968); 4= Meyer de Schauensee & Phelps (1978); 5 = Naumburg (1930); 6= Sick (1984); 7 = Skutch (1969); 8 = Slud (1942); 9 = Stiles & Skutch (1989); 10 = Wetmore (1972); 11 = Willis (1972); 12= Willis (1982).

2). However, only four species of Woodcreepers are smaller than Tawny-winged Woodcreeper; all other species are roughly equal in size or larger, and are probably capable of handling small vertebrate prey. Hence, we suspect that most species of Woodcreepers, with the possible exception of the smallest species, occasionally feed on vertebrates

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank J. R. Contreras for assistance in finding pertinent literature, and E. H. Burt, Jr., M. S. Foster, R. A. Paynter, Jr., J. V. Remsen, Jr and anonymous reviewers for comments on previous versions of the manuscript. FEH thanks Alan and Karen Robinson, who shared his observation, for inviting him on their Chaco trip. FEH was employed by the United States Peace Corps during this study. JEA's trip to Retiro Potrerito was funded by the Asociación de Apoyo a las Comunidades Indígenas; Ticio Escobar Argaña shared this observation.

Table 2. Comparison of number of woodcreeper species in different body length categories (based on Blake [1953] and Meyer de Schauensee [1970]) known or not known to feed or attempt to feed on vertebrate prey.

	Body Length		
	< 20 cm	20-25 cm	> 25 cm
Known to feed on vertebrates	1	5	7
Not known to feed on vertebrates	6	16	15

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Nidificación de *Theristicus caudatus* en Uruguay

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ABSTRACT.- *Theristicus caudatus* breeding in Uruguay.

The Buff-necked Ibis is considered a summer visitant in northern Uruguay (Cuello y Gerzenstein 1962, Gore y Gepp 1978). On December 12, 1987, a nest with four white-grayish chicks was discovered. It was placed 15 metres above water level at a rocky wall of Laureles creek in the hilly region at Tacurembó Departament.

This confirms that the species or at least part of its population is resident in Uruguay.

La bandurria baya *Theristicus caudatus* ha sido registrada en campos serranos de los departamentos norteños de Tacuarembó, Artigas, Salto y Rivera, siendo tenida como un ave migratoria de paso, visitante de verano (Cuello y Gerzenstein 1962, Gore y Gepp 1978), insinuándose por parte de estos últimos, su posible nidificación para nuestro territorio.

En el paraje denominado "Rincón de Vasoura", ubicado en la zona Norte del Dpto. de Tacuarembó marcando el límite con el Dpto. de Rivera, se encuentra una zona serrana atravesada por el Aº Laureles, cuyo curso transcurre entre altos acantilados teniendo en algunas partes unos 30 m de altura sobre el nivel de las aguas. El 12 de diciembre de 1987 se encontró un nido de esta especie en la mencionado zona. El mismo estaba ubicado en una repisa de una roca a unos 15 m de altura, apoyado directamente en el suelo entre bromelias (*Dyckia* sp.). Estaba construido con ramitas finas y revestido con algunas gramíneas; contenía cuatro pichones con plumón blanco grisáceo. El nido era bastante inaccesible, razón por la cual no se pudieron tomar medidas del mismo, ni hacer una descripción detallada de los pichones. Las observaciones se realizaron a distancia con prismáticos 7 x 50.

Se pudo observar además que los dos adultos participaban en la alimentación de los pichones. Durante las diez horas y cuarenta y cinco minutos que duró la observación (8:30 a 18:45), la pareja se relevó una sola vez a las 9:30, permaneciendo este individuo durante el tiempo restante, en el nido o en las cercanías del mismo. El otro adulto se hizo presente solo una vez, alimentando a los pichones durante unos 15 minutos, marchándose luego. El otro individuo que habia permanecido acicalándose el plumaje y cazando algunos insectos a unos 2 m de distancia tomó nuevamente el lugar. Se escuchó comunicación vocal entre los dos adultos durante el arribo al nido y también al abandonarlo. Los pichones se alimentaron introduciendo el pico y la cabeza en el pico de los adultos.

La información sobre nidificación de esta especie es escasa, pero según Nores e Yzurieta